

Kent Held A Lesson Unheeded

Loaded Rifles Unnecessary, Panel Declares

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The President's Commission on Campus Unrest concluded after an extensive investigation that the deaths of four students at Kent State University in Ohio last May 4 were "unnecessary, unwarranted and inexcusable."

The Commission, whose report was released here yesterday, found that "the actions of some students were violent and criminal and those of some others were dangerous, reckless and irresponsible."

But it said that the shootings by the Ohio National Guard, causing injury to nine students in addition to those killed, were the result of an unlearned lesson of civil disturbance control.

"The general issuance of loaded weapons to law enforcement officers engaged in controlling disorders is never justified except in the case of armed resistance that trained sniper teams are unable to handle," the commission report said.

"This was not the case at Kent State, yet each guardsman carried a loaded M-1 rifle. The lesson is not new. The National Advisory (Kerner) Commission on Civil Disorders and the guidelines of the Department of the Army set it out explicitly," the 92-page report concludes.

In the judgment of the Commission:

"No one would have died at Kent State if this lesson had been learned by the Ohio National Guard."

This is the second of two special reports of the Commission on campus deaths.

See KENT, A4, Col. 1

KENT, From A1

The first, released last week, concluded that the shootings at Jackson (Miss.) State College, killing two men and injuring 12 other persons, were "clearly unwarranted."

The 9-member Commission, portions of whose over-all report on campus unrest have already been the subject of criticism from members of the Administration that appointed it, said that it hoped the tragedy of Kent State would serve the nation in the future.

"The Kent State tragedy," the Commission said, "must surely mark the last time that loaded rifles are issued as a matter of course to guardsmen confronting student demonstrators."

Campuses Erupt

After President Nixon announced on April 30 that he had ordered troops into Cambodia, hundreds of campuses erupted with strident demonstrations against the war.

On the first weekend in May, Kent State, with a student population of 20,000, was among those previously calm campuses that experienced unprecedented disorder.

Much of the commission's report describes in detail the sequence of events that led to the four deaths.

Late Friday night stores in downtown Kent, population 30,000, were "trashed" — vandalized — by youths, causing \$10,000 in property damage on North Water Street.

Fearing that its small police force could not handle the situation, the city administration favored calling in the Ohio National Guard, which had already been activated for duty in a Teamster strike at Akron, 15 miles to the west.

ROTC Building Burned

Saturday evening, as the National Guard troops were preparing to enter the situation, the frame ROTC building was set afire. A faculty member who witnessed the burning was later to say:

"I have never in my 17 years of teaching seen a group of students as threatening or as arrogant or as bent on destruction. . . ."

The guard and campus police gave protection to firemen who came on campus in an unsuccessful attempt to put out the fire in the ROTC building. The University set the loss of the building and its contents at \$86,000, the commission re-

port noted.

Soon order was restored, although several rock throwing incidents occurred. Tear gas hung over the campus, now fully occupied by the National Guard.

On Sunday, Gov. James Rhodes, a candidate for the Senate in a primary election that upcoming Tuesday, held a press conference at Kent State.

"We have the same groups going from one campus to the other," Gov. Rhodes said, "and they use the universities . . . as a sanctuary."

Campus Closing Suggested

While the governor was in Kent, the Portage County prosecutor suggested to him that the campus be closed down. The commission report says:

"Rhodes declined, saying that would be playing into the hands of the Weathermen . . . university official tried to attend this meeting, but he was excluded."

It also says:

"Many felt the governor had spoken firmly and forthrightly. Others felt that his remarks were inflammatory and that . . . many students believed the governor was hoping his words and actions at Kent would win him additional votes in the primary election. . . ."

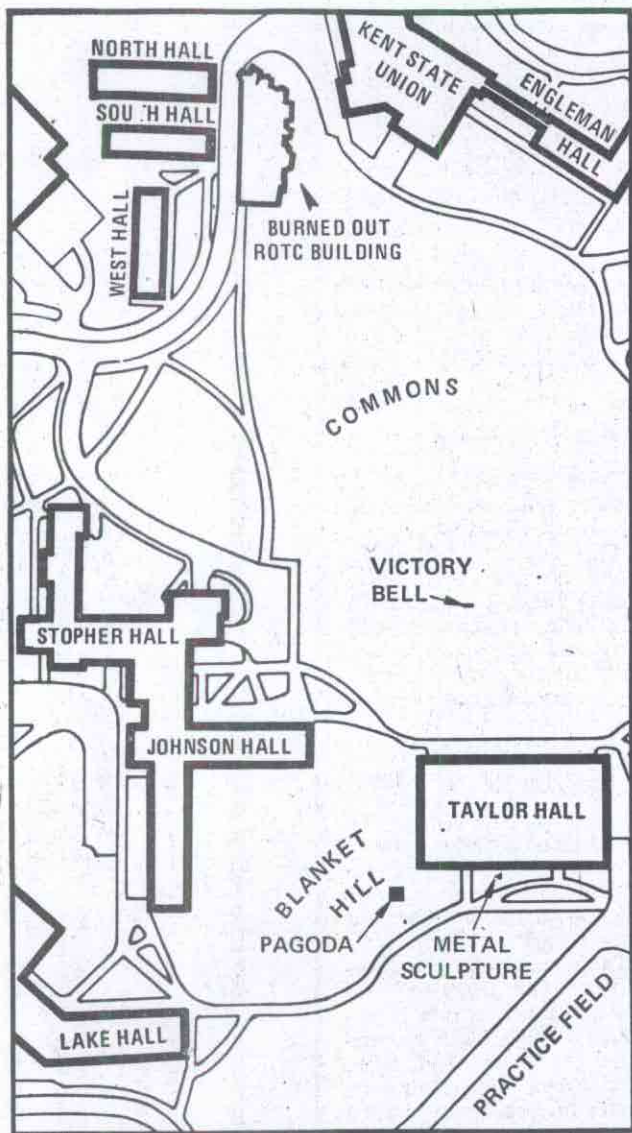
When the governor departed that afternoon, University officials, including President Robert I. White, were uncertain what his orders were to the Guard.

"Events," White said in a broadcast to the students, "have taken decisions out of the university hands."

The commission found that "many students remained confused all day Sunday about the rules governing the campus and what they permitted."

Riot Act Read

Shortly before 9 p.m., the commission sequence says, a crowd gathered on the Campus Commons and an official of the Guard "read the Ohio Riot Act and gave them five minutes to disperse. When they did not, police proceeded to disperse them with tear gas. One group headed toward President White's house . . . The students were driven away from White's home by tear gas."



Kent State University's Blanket Hill, where Guard fired on students. Four died.

Another group at Prentiss Gate presented six demands, including the abolition of ROTC, removal of the Guard by Monday night, lifting of the curfew and amnesty for the students arrested the previous night.

One guard official estimated that by 11:45 a.m., the crowd had grown to 500. Canterbury ordered the crowd dispersed.

Lt. Col. Charles R. Fassinger "then ordered troops to form up by the ruins of the ROTC building," the report loaded rifles.

said. The Guardsmen carried later tell the commission his reason for dispersing the students was that "an assembly at this point would have been dangerous." He said university officials concurred in that judgment.

Tear gas was used, but it did not at first scatter the students.

Through a series of confused exchanges, the commission found, the students were led to believe they would be addressed at Prentiss Gate by university officials. They were told at 11 Sunday night that they had to disperse, that the curfew was then in effect.

"The students, previously nonviolent, became hostile," the Commission reports.

"They cursed the guardsmen and police and threw rocks at them. Tear gas was fired and

Gen. Canterbury would the crowd ran back from the gate across the campus lawn . . . Two students were bayoneted and sustained minor cuts . . . Three guardsmen received cuts and bruises from thrown stones and a wrench.

"A helicopter had been hovering over the Prentiss Gate sit-in. Its spotlight illuminated the scene, following the students as they ran. Its wash increased the effectiveness of the gas along the ground. Among the fleeing students was Allison Krouse," who within hours would be among the four dead.

Arrests Top 100

By Monday, the weekend disturbances had brought to more than 100 the number of students arrested, mostly for curfew violations. And the Guardsmen who would be involved in the shooting at 12:45 p.m. would have had less than three hours sleep. Their nerves would be further frayed by the rocks and taunts.

The students wanted to hold a noon protest rally and word of it spread quickly. The general in charge at Kent, Robert H. Canterbury, issued orders to his men after a meeting with university officials that the rally was not to be permitted.

At 11 a.m., students began gathering on the common. "Some had heard vaguely that a rally would be held, the commission said. "Some came to protest the presence of the Guard. Some were simply curious or had free time because their classes had been cancelled. Some stopped by on their way to or from lunch or class. The Commons is a major crossroads between several major university buildings."

The antagonism between the Guard and the students by then was deep, the report said. "The Guardsmen felt the students, who had disobeyed numerous orders to disperse, were clearly in the wrong . . .

"Many students felt that the campus was their 'turf.' Unclear about the authority vested in the guard by the governor, or indifferent to it, some felt their constitutional right to free assembly was being infringed upon."

Battle on Campus

The battle that ensued moved over the campus, up Blanket Hill and down again. Tear gas canisters were discharged by the guard and thrown back. One student called it a "tennis match." Many cheered as the canisters were exchanged.

Gen. Canterbury, after a time, ordered his men to withdraw into what he hoped the students would recognize as a clearly defensive posture.

The move, the commission says, "did not disperse the crowd and seems to have done little else than increase tension, subject guardsmen to needless abuse and encourage the most violent and irresponsible elements in the crowd to harass the Guard further."

As the Guard trotted up Blanket Hill, being pelted by rocks as they went, "Fassinger removed his gas mask to see more clearly. He said the guardsmen had reached a point between the Pagoda and Taylor Hall . . . when he heard a sound like a shot, which was immediately followed by a volley of shots. . . . He yelled 'Cease Fire!' and ran along the line repeating the command." Another officer did the same and "rushed

down the line shoving rifle barrels up and away from the crowd. He hit several guardsmen on their helmets with his swagger stick to stop them from firing."

Allison Krause, 110 yards away, was killed by a bullet that passed through her left upper arm and left side.

Jeffrey Glenn Miller, 85 to 90 yards away, was killed by a shot in the mouth.

William K. Schroeder, 130 yards away, was killed by a shot in the left back at the seventh rib.

Sandra Lee Scheuer, 130 yards away, was killed by a shot through the left front side of the neck.

The nearest student to the guard was injured from a distance of 20 yards, the farthest was injured at a distance 245 to 250 yards.

No Sniper Evidence

There is no evidence of a sniper, as had been reported by the Guard at the time, the commission said, and there was no order from an officer to fire. Most of the students were beyond a range to do the Guard serious harm, the report said.

"Kent State," the Commission says, "was a national tragedy. It was not, however, a unique tragedy. Only the magnitude of the student disorder and the extent of the student deaths set it apart . . . We must learn from the particular horror of Kent State and insure that it is never repeated."